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INSTRUCTION IN THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

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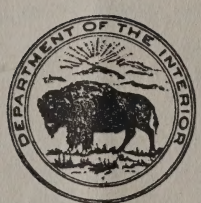

LEAFLET NO. 38

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR - - *Harold L. Ickes*, Secretary

OFFICE OF EDUCATION - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - *George F. Zook*, Commissioner

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE - - - - - - - - - - - WASHINGTON : 1934

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Price 5 cents

INSTRUCTION IN THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

"Self-narcotization and self-alcoholization are rather ignoble substitutes for undisturbed self." —OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

"The guide to the use of, or abstinence from, alcohol is not physiology but common experience." —SIR MICHAEL FOSTER.

WITH THE repeal of the eighteenth amendment there is renewed interest in public-school instruction in the effects of alcohol on the human being. This interest has never fully lapsed, for the passage of the national prohibition law did not nullify the State laws requiring instruction in this field. In fact, some States have modified their laws since 1920 in order to make them more effective.

The subjects of alcohol and tobacco have not been omitted from textbooks and courses of study, and in 1930 the State Department of Education of West Virginia issued a special syllabus on the nature and effects of alcoholic drinks and narcotics.

Legal requirements.—With the exception of Wyoming, all States have laws which require that the effects of alcohol and narcotics be taught in public schools. As far back as 1889 Wyoming had such a law, but in 1927 the choice of subjects of instruction was placed in the hands of the State department of education.

In 14 States a penalty is imposed for failure to furnish the required instruction. In 12 States the laws require that prospective teachers shall pass a satisfactory examination on the nature and effects of alcohol and other narcotics.

In 9 States appropriate information must be supplied in textbooks and, in some instances, the number of pages, or proportion of pages, devoted to the subject is specified.

In 12 States a special annual Temperance Day is set apart to be observed with appropriate exercises.

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In 7 States instruction in the subject must be furnished in the teacher-training schools.

In 40 States the law specifies that the teaching of the effects of alcohol and of other "stimulants" or "narcotics" shall be conducted in connection with that of physiology and hygiene.

A digest of the State laws was published by the Department of Justice in 1931, and a copy may be secured from the Government Printing Office.

History repeats itself.—The wave of legislation which swept the country a half century ago will not need to be repeated, but there will be a wave of reinforcement and a revival of interest in courses of study and in textbooks bearing on the subject. Those who prepare classroom material on the subject may well have in mind that what was furnished in this field a short time ago was not always satisfactory to all concerned. In this connection the study of the Committee of Fifty to Investigate the Liquor Problem should be of interest. A more distinguished and representative group than this committee could hardly have been chosen and its study, completed in 1903, was a model of thoroughness. The chapter on "Present Instruction on the Physiological Action of Alcohol", prepared by Professor Bowditch of Harvard and Professor Hodge of Clark University, covers 136 pages of the first volume of the report.[1]

A questionnaire on the condition of "scientific temperance instruction" was sent by the committee to superintendents and principals in Massachusetts and 83 cities and towns were heard from. The results of instruction were thus weighed by these schoolmen:

	Percent of replies
Excellent	2
Good	11
Medium	15
Little	14
None	55
Bad	3

Questions concerning the school physiologies "approved and endorsed" by temperance societies were sent by the

[1] Billings, John S., *ed.* Physiological aspects of the liquor problem. New York, N.Y., Houghton Mifflin Company, 1903.

committee, about 1895, to teachers in Massachusetts, New York, and Wisconsin and the following were the returns:

	Good	*Bad*
Massachusetts	19	28
New York	15	40
Wisconsin	13	18
Total	47	86

The chief objections to the books were that they did not tell the truth. The report on this subject is thus summarized:[2]

Much of the methods and substance of the so-called scientific temperance instruction in the public schools is unscientific and undesirable. This appears to us a matter of grave importance.

It does not seem to this subcommittee desirable to attempt to give systematic instruction to all children in the primary schools on the subject of the action of alcohol or of alcoholic drinks. To older children, and especially those in the high schools, it does seem proper that instruction should be given as to the principal facts known about the use and effects of alcoholic drinks, the sociological and especially the ethical relations of the subject, the means which have been tried to prevent the evils resulting from alcoholism—and the results—the object being to enable them to form an intelligent opinion upon the whole subject, especially to distinguish between mere assertions and scientific evidence.

This teaching should not be made a special, isolated matter, but should be a part of some elementary instruction in physiology and hygiene, and all that is really useful and desirable can be given in a brief time, equivalent to a few lessons of an hour each, following the lessons on food. In these lessons might be taught what the ordinary alcoholic drinks are, and of what and how they are made, the difference between simple fermented drinks, like beer and wine, and distilled liquor, such as whisky, the nature of the so-called "temperance drinks", and the general effects of alcohol as a stimulant and as a narcotic. It might be taught that while in moderate quantities beer and wine may be, in a certain sense, a food, they are a very imperfect and expensive kind of food, and are seldom used for food purposes; that they are not needed by young and healthy persons, and are dangerous to them insofar as they tend to create a habit; that in certain cases of disease and weakness they are useful in quantities to be prescribed by physicians; that when taken habitually it should be only at meals, and, as a rule, only with the last meal of the day, or soon after it, and that alcoholic drinks of all kinds are worse than useless to prevent fatigue or the effects of cold, although they may at times be useful as restoratives after the work is done.

[2] Ibid.

It should also be taught that alcoholic drinks are almost always a useless expense, that their use in excess is the cause of much disease, suffering, and poverty, and of many crimes; but that such use is sometimes the result, rather than the cause, of disease.

The tendency to overdo the thing in materials for instruction, prepared in the past century, was largely the outcome of a deservedly violent reaction against the evil effects of the use or abuse of alcohol under the saloon system. This led to decidedly dogmatic teaching. However, as Sir Alfred Ewing put it, " The ' average man ' as well as the ' scientist ' is, in his own way, commonly a seeker after the truth. He listens gladly when the specialist drops his toga and admits that in scientific matters the only dogma is that there is no dogma." Owing to the enormous difference in individual reaction to alcohol, dogma is especially absent from scientific statements on this subject. We can now view the matter more broadly, and our knowledge is better defined in 1934 than it was in 1903. Present-day textbooks on physiology and hygiene are far more sane and sensible in their treatment of the effects of alcohol. In number or percentage of pages they will hardly measure up to the requirements of some State laws, but what can be presented in a few words is none the more effective for much use of language.

A Swiss physiologist answering an inquiry of the Committee of Fifty remarked that he was shocked to learn that " in primary and middle grades every child from 6 to 17 years is instructed 250 hours in the physiology of alcohol. If I ", he continued, " were to teach this subject 5 hours I should know nothing more to say and should probably be discharged by the authorities as a stupid teacher."

In their book, *Toward Liquor Control*, Fosdick and Scott point out, " We need clear, unprejudiced dissemination of facts. This requires a tolerant spirit, and tolerance in education, free from the bias of preconceived objectives, is perhaps difficult to achieve. But it is distinctly within the range of possibility to promote understanding of facts to a point where common knowledge supports a steadily improving national ideal. Whatever line temperance instruction may take, its chief emphasis, if it is to capture this younger generation, should be on life and health and not on disease and death. It should be constructive, not negative. The

necessity of keeping fit for work and sport is a far more effective appeal than moral homilies. Our young people cannot be browbeaten into righteousness or frightened into good behavior. They are alert to detect exaggeration, and they are not moved by sanctimonious exhortation. It is this kind of approach which has too often made temperance teaching in the past what one well-known educator called a ' pedagogical monstrosity.' The only effective appeal today is an appeal not to fear or prejudice but to intelligence." [3]

Recent school material.—As previously noted, West Virginia added in 1930 to its course of study for elementary schools a special supplement on the nature of *Alcoholic Drinks and Narcotics, Their Effects Upon the Human System*, and also *Units of Instruction* on the subject for courses in junior and senior high schools.

In 1933 the State Department of Massachusetts issued a *Manual for Teaching the Effects of Alcohol, Stimulants, and Narcotics Upon the Human Body.* This provides briefly a course for State teachers colleges, gives information and source materials for teachers of all grades, together with a general outline for grades I to VI, for junior high schools, and for senior high schools.

The *Course of Study in Health Instruction for Secondary Schools* issued by the Pennsylvania State Department of Public Instruction in 1931 contains a section on " Stimulants and Narcotics ", and the *Health and Physical Education Series* of the State of Ohio, Department of Education, *Program for Junior and Senior High Schools* includes the subjects of Alcohol and Tobacco. The suggestions to teachers in these two manuals make it evident that methods of handling the subject are very different from those that existed when the Committee of Fifty made its study. The " teaching suggestions " of the Ohio syllabus are:

> Investigate occupational regulations concerning drinking.
> Investigate effect of alcohol upon the occurrence of accidents.
> Investigate data concerning chemistry of various alcohols.
> Investigate mortality rates of alcohol users.
> Investigate traffic accidents in relation to intoxication.

[3] Fosdick, Raymond B. *and* Scott, Albert L. Toward liquor control. New York, N.Y., Harper and Brothers, 1933.

The course of study of Pennsylvania advises—

> Teach by use of facts and scientific evidence rather than emotional exhortation. Avoid arousing curiosity to test effects of smoking, alcohol, or drugs. Appeal to pupils' desire for fitness in sports, efficiency in play and work, vigorous health, safety, service to others, and high character qualities.

Besides courses of study issued by public schools, the National Women's Christian Temperance Union, published in 1933 a *Syllabus in Alcohol Education*, prepared by Bertha R. Palmer.[4]

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

Those who are interested in education with reference to alcohol or tobacco and their effects will find the results of recent investigations and reviews of past studies in the following works:

ALCOHOL

(*a*) Alcohol: Its effect on man. Haven Emerson, *ed.* New York, N.Y., D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934.
(*b*) Alcohol and man. Haven Emerson, *ed.* New York, N.Y., The Macmillan Co., 1932. (Contains numerous references.)
(*c*) A review of the effects of alcohol on man. London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1931.
(*d*) The alcohol problem, H. M. Vernon, *ed.* London, Balliere, Tindall, and Cox, 1928.
(*e*) The drink problem of today. T. N. Kelynack, *ed.* New York, N.Y., E. P. Dutton & Co., 1916.
(*f*) Effects of alcoholic drinks: A review. E. L. B. Transeau, *ed.* Boston, Mass., Scientific Temperance Foundation, 1933.
(*g*) What about alcohol? Emil Bogen *and* L. W. S. Hisey. Los Angeles, Scientific Education Publishers, 1934.

In the aforementioned books, (c) and (e) contain material on history of the use of alcohol and on economic conditions as affected by the consumption of alcohol.

A brief summary of the effects of alcohol will be found in *Preventive Medicine and Hygiene* by M. J. Rosenau, fifth edition, D. Appleton & Co., in *Public Health and Hygiene*, by W. H. Park, second edition, Lea and Febiger, and in the

[4] May be obtained from the National W.C.T.U., Evanston, Ill.

sections on alcohol and temperance in recent encyclopedias. The following articles will also be of interest:

Alcohol and the child. F. Humbert. World's health, 9:243–247; 276–283; 317–327, July, August, September, 1928.

Medicine looks at alcohol. Haven Emerson. Survey, 60:542–545, November 1933.

TOBACCO

On the subject of tobacco the following books should be of interest:

Tobacco and mental efficiency. M. V. O'Shea. New York, N.Y. Macmillan company, 1923.

Tobacco and physical efficiency. P. Schrump-Pierron. New York, N.Y., Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1927.

Tobacco. W. L. Mendenhall. Harvard University Press, 1930.

The student who smokes. J. Rosslyn Earp. Yellow Springs, Ohio. The Antioch Press.

The works on public health, by M. J. Rosenau *and* W. H. Park. (Previously mentioned.)

Recent encyclopedias may also be consulted.

Among the many articles appearing recently in journals are:

The tobacco habit. W. E. Dixon. British Journal of Inebriety, 25:99–121, January 1928.

The medical aspects of tobacco. H. Rolleston. Lancet, 1:961–965, May 22, 1926.

Tobacco, its use and abuse. R. Armstrong-Jones. Practitioner, 116:6–19, January 1927.

Physique of smokers. H. S. Diehl. Minnesota Medicine, 12:424, July 1929.

Health and scholarship. H. S. Diehl. Public Health Report, December 13, 1929.

Smoking and endurance. T. F. Kennedy. Journal Royal Army Medical Corps, 57:451, December 1931.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Recent Publications of the Office of Education

Better teeth. (Health Education Series No. 20.) 5 cents.

Diet for the school child. (Health Education Series No. 2.) 5 cents.

Dramatics for health teaching. (Health Education Series No. 13.) 5 cents.

The health of the teacher. (School Health Studies No. 12.) 10 cents.

The lunch hour at school. (Health Education Series No. 7.) 5 cents.

Milk and our school children. (Health Education Series No. 11.) 5 cents.

Sanitation of schools. (Leaflet No. 1.) 5 cents.

Sleep. (Health Education Series No. 12.) 5 cents.

The speech-defective school child. (Bulletin, 1931, No. 7.) 10 cents.

Speech defects and their correction. (Pamphlet No. 22.) 5 cents.

Ten steps in the promotion of health in rural schools. (School Health Studies No. 14.) 5 cents.

What every teacher should know about the physical condition of her pupils. (Health Education Series No. 18.) 5 cents.

The kindergarten and health. (Health Education Series No. 14.) 5 cents.

Suggestions for a program of health teaching in elementary schools. (Health Education Series No. 10.) 10 cents.

Suggestions for a program for health teaching in the high school. (Health Education Series No. 15.) 5 cents.

Suggestions for a physical education program for small secondary schools. (Physical Education Series, No. 3.) 10 cents.

The above publications are available from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., at the prices stated.

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